



MARK POCAN

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

PO Box 8953 • Madison, WI 53708 608/266-8570

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For More Information, Contact:

Rep. Mark Pocan, 608/266-8570

FEBRUARY “GOLDEN TURKEY” AWARDED TO ALLIANT ENERGY CORP.

Major utility company wants to shut off heat during winter apparently to pay for failing gated community investment in Mexico

Madison –Representative Mark Pocan (D-Madison) today awarded the Golden Turkey Award to Alliant Energy Corporation for shamelessly attempting to shut off people’s heat in the dead of winter, only weeks after gaining sole ownership of a trouble-ridden gated community investment in Mexico. Almost unnoticed, last Thursday the Public Service Commission (PSC) denied Alliant Energy’s request to grant them the ability to turn off energy for non-paying customers in winter.

“The idea that a utility company would want to turn off a family’s heat in the middle of winter is preposterous,” said Pocan. “Alliant Energy should be ashamed for being so heartless. Instead of asking the state to allow them to turn the heat off for Wisconsin families, maybe we should be regulating what types of risky investments they can undertake at the expense of the ratepayers,” he added.

The Public Service Commission recently denied a request by Alliant Energy, a.k.a. Wisconsin Power and Light Company, which would have allowed Alliant to independently decide when to disconnect a customer’s power during the winter heating moratorium if the customer is unable to make payment. The request could have affected anyone making more than 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Further, energy utilities are one of few entities allowed by statutory language to be able to recover unpaid fees, without reduction. In other words, if a customer doesn’t pay their bill, they will have to eventually pay it in full without any settlement reduction. Statute allows this unique recovery language partially due to the fact that they cannot shut the power off for non-payment during cold Wisconsin Winters. Utilities can also garnish wages and collect treble damages.

“Before they start going after the consumer, maybe they should get their own business practices in order,” Pocan said, referencing a \$82 million investment Alliant Energy made in “Laguna del Mar”, a gated golf resort community in Mexico. (www.lagunadelmar.com)

The project has been plagued by storms, disputes and other problems. Recently, Alliant Energy was advertising the project in “Millionaire” magazine.

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“Alliant would rather make sure millionaires vacationing in Mexico have plenty of air conditioning and ice cold beer on the golf course, than making sure Wisconsin families don’t freeze in a February winter. This sort of risky investment is not what Wisconsin ratepayers should be compensating,” said Pocan.

Alliant wanted to be able to put moderate-income folks out in the cold according to their proposed winter disconnection plan, which would allow them to shut off power on a two-person family each making an average of \$7.51 per hour.

“It takes more than putting your name on a building to be a good neighbor,” Pocan said. “You have to actually care about a community. And that community should preferably be in Wisconsin rather than Mexico.”

This winter is predicted to be the third consecutive winter with staggeringly high increased heating costs. The commission adopted the moratorium rule in 1984 to provide health and safety protections during Wisconsin’s cold winters.

In the tradition of the Golden Fleece award started by former U.S. Senator William Proxmire, Pocan awards the “Golden Turkey” for the worst bill, agency action, governmental waste or other political development each month in Wisconsin.